

**you still look like a movie, you still sound like a song.**  
**by hannahsviolets**

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**Genre:** Bisexual Steve Harrington, F/M, bad summary i know, jonathan is gay, lucas and will are dating, max is a lesbian w a gf, mike and el are engaged, sort of a fix it fic i guess?, there's other characters obviously but those are the mains, they talk a lot of stuff out?

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**Summary:**

Nancy Wheeler returns to Hawkins for the first time in ten years, and realizes that not everything about her hometown is as terrible as she thought it was.

# 1. Chapter 1

It felt far longer than ten years since Nancy had been back to Hawkins. Her hometown held nothing but bad memories for her, and she'd sworn the second she'd gone off to NYU that she'd never return. Yet here she was, driving past the 'You are now entering Hawkins' sign that might as well have said 'You are now entering Hell.'

It was all Mike's fault, really, as most things were. He'd phoned last month to announce that he and El were getting married and of course, they were getting married to Hawkins. It made absolutely no sense to Nancy. Why would Eleven want to get married in a place that had never done anything good for her? Probably some romantic bullshit about it being the place that she and Mike had first met. Nancy rolled her eyes at that. The two had always been so sickeningly sweet. But it wasn't as if she was going to skip her little brother's wedding. Every other event she'd ever been invited to in the town, yes, but not this one.

She and Jonathan had decided on going to university together. They'd both gotten scholarships and once they moved out there, they got jobs so they could afford to buy an apartment together. Jonathan flew home every now and then to visit with his family, but Nancy always insisted that if her parents or siblings wanted to see her, they could just come to New York. They did a couple of times, but money was tight and they still had two kids to send to college. She spoke with her mom on the phone maybe once a month and she'd started exchanging e-mails with Holly during the past year, but that was the extent of their interactions. Nancy felt guilty about it, but not guilty enough to take action. Mike's invitation had seemed like the perfect opportunity to get back into steady contact with her family, and since he'd opened the door, she was going to take advantage of it. El still didn't talk all that much, but Nancy had called her twice during the past week to ask questions about her dress and the venue (which was surprising to El, to say the least). Nancy wanted this trip to be special. She was going to do everything in her power to make it special.

"You sure your parents know what time we're coming?" asked

Jonathan, who was sitting beside her on the bus.

“I told my mom yesterday. I already told you that,” she said under her breath.

“I just forgot. Sorry,”

He was always forgetting things now.

These were the first words that they’d exchanged since getting off the plane.

The walk from the bus stop to the Wheelers’ home was a short one. Nancy silently huffed when Jonathan didn’t offer to carry her luggage for her. *You’re here for Mike. You’re here for him. Don’t make a scene already. This isn’t about you.* She could hold it together for two weeks. Fourteen days. That’s all it was.

When Karen and Ted weren’t waiting outside for them, Jonathan started to make a snide remark, but Nancy gave him a look. Holly was the one who answered the door and even though Nancy had seen her six months ago, she was shocked to see how much she’d grown in that short period of time. At fifteen, she stood about Nancy’s height, with her long blonde hair pulled back into a high ponytail.

“Nancy!” she exclaimed, throwing her arms around her big sister. “I’m so excited to see you!”

Nancy thought to herself that this had been the exact opposite of how Mike was towards her when he was fifteen, but she supposed not knowing Holly all that well explained it away.

“Mom, Dad, Mike, Nancy’s home!” she bellowed into their house that hadn’t changed since Nancy had left it in 1986.

Jonathan and Holly awkwardly exchanged hellos as Nancy handed him off her bags to bring into the house. Ted held his usual boring, unamused gaze as he kissed his daughter hello and welcomed her home. Karen, however, began sobbing the instant that she saw Nancy and wouldn’t let go of her for what felt like five minutes. “I missed you so much. My baby girl. My first baby. My first baby! She’s home, she’s finally home where she belongs,”

“Mom, c’mon. Let her go,” Mike was nearly a full foot taller than Nancy now and he easily towered over Jonathan, which was almost laughable. His black hair was cut shorter than Nancy had ever seen it and his freckles had disappeared over the years. Still, he was completely recognizable and his presence was oddly comforting. Mike gently pulled Karen off of Nancy, handing her off to Jonathan. He gave Nancy a small smile and hugged her awkwardly. “Thanks for coming, sis.”

“Thanks for coming, sis?” Was she such a bad sister that he’d really thought she’d miss his wedding?

“Uh, yeah, of course. I’d never miss this,”

Mike led her into the house, where El was sitting on the living room couch. Unlike Mike, she hadn’t changed a bit other than growing a bit taller. Nancy hadn’t seen her in maybe five years, when she and Mike had come up to look at colleges in the city. She had the same wide-eyed innocence that she had as a child when she spoke with Jonathan, but when she saw Nancy, the kindness in her smile faltered and was replaced with something else.

“El, come say hi to Nancy!” said Mike, helping her off the couch.

El held out her hand to her. “Welcome home, Nancy,”

Nancy shook it, unsure if she should reject it for a hug or not. El probably wouldn’t like it. She probably didn’t like physical contact unless she was the one initiating it. Nancy didn’t know because she’d never asked.

“I’m so happy to see you, El. I can’t wait to see everything that you have planned,”

“It’s all going to be perfect because of Mike,” Eleven answered, putting extra emphasis on her fiancé’s name. There was clearly a hidden meaning behind her words, but Nancy chose not to look too deeply into it.

Nancy nodded. “I’m sure it will be,”

“Come to the dining room, Nancy! We have so much to talk

about!” said Karen when she finally let go of Jonathan.

It shouldn't have been awkward having a conversation with her family. Ten years ago, it probably wouldn't have been. Everything was so different now, and everything that Ted said held underlying bitterness. Nancy wasn't sure that she could blame him. All of Karen's conversation topics felt so strange and unfamiliar that Nancy was glad when Holly said “Oh my God, Mom, we get it! Sandra is awful! Nancy has to hear about what happened at lunch on Friday now,” and began ranting all about the latest freshman drama. After everything that had happened while Nancy was a teenager, Holly's problems seemed so insignificant. It wasn't like she could judge her, though. Her younger sister knew nothing of the past.

“So, Mike,” Jonathan cleared his throat uncomfortably when Holly finished with her story. “How'd this happen? I mean . . . I know how it happened, but how'd you um, propose?”

Mike's facial expression visibly fell flat when Jonathan spoke to him but he managed to hide it quite well. He took Eleven's hand on top of the table and ran a finger over her knuckles. “We were in town for Mom's birthday. I wasn't really planning anything – I mean, I knew I wanted to propose at some point, but not like, right then. But anyway, we were going for a walk and we stopped by the middle school and we were getting all emotional talking about old times and I just . . . asked her,”

“You proposed at the middle school?” Nancy raised her eyebrows. “Without a ring?”

“He gave me a ring the next day. We picked it out together. I thought it was romantic,” said El.

Only those two would find anything about this fucking town romantic.

“That's really sweet,” said Jonathan. He said it was so genuinely that Nancy was surprised. He'd been acting so different lately. Normally, he would've agreed with her that that was a dumb way of proposing.

“Thanks,” Mike smiled. “We just want to get married here, surrounded by everyone who’s ever been in our lives. The good people, anyway. It’s probably gonna end up being a lot smaller than most weddings, but it’ll still be nice,”

“So nice!” Karen squeezed her hands together, her grin bright. “Nancy, you just have to see Jane’s dress. It’s so beautiful!”

“Karen, not in front of Mike,” El chastised quietly.

“Sorry! I’m just so excited! I mean, come on, one of my babies is getting married!”

“It’s not like it hasn’t happened before,” Ted mumbled.

Nancy shut her eyes. She’d prepared for this, because it happened every time they saw her parents, but she didn’t think her father would bring it up so soon and in front of Mike and Eleven.

A few years into school, she and Jonathan had eloped. It had seemed like a good idea at the time. While it had mostly been done for tax reasons, Nancy could honestly say that she’d never felt more in love with Jonathan than she had at that time. And she didn’t want their families there for the ceremony. Marriage and love were about intimacy. They didn’t need to make a big show of it. So they’d gotten married at city hall, with two of Nancy’s co-workers as their witnesses. It had taken Nancy a full week to work up the courage to call home. Her mother had (according to Mike) cried for a full week. Joyce’s reaction had been better. She’d been sad, but she understood their reasoning and accepted it, offering them both congratulations. Nancy had insisted to everyone that she didn’t regret not telling anybody. Maybe in high school, she would’ve wanted a real wedding, but that just wasn’t her thing anymore and it had never been Jonathan’s thing. People couldn’t hate them for making decisions as a couple and they couldn’t hate them for doing what was best for them. Karen had forgiven Nancy eventually, but they both knew she was still upset about it. Ted was still angry that they’d gone against traditional values, which pissed Nancy off more than anything. She had little to no relationship with her father and he wanted to take an interest in her life now that she was married? (“You didn’t even take his name!” he’d chided her on one occasion).

“So anyways, Nancy, I have the *cutest* Phys Ed. Coach,” Holly interrupted, clearly not wanting to hear this fight again. “Mom says you guys went to high school with him.”

“Oh? What’s his name?”

The obvious hearts in Holly’s eyes grew larger. “Steve Harrington,”

Nancy nearly choked on her water. She hadn’t heard the name ‘Steve Harrington’ since high school and she hadn’t thought about him in years, probably. Mike spoke before she could even get a word in. “I see him all the time, Holly. We’re friends, you know that. Why is it more important if Nancy knows him?”

“Wait – you’re friends with Steve Harrington?” Nancy raised her eyebrows.

Mike looked surprised that she was asking this. “Yeah – we – yeah? Yeah. We’ve been friends for like a decade now – he used to babysit us and now we’re friends – you didn’t know that?”

She’d known that Steve had taken to looking after the kids during her last year of high school, but she didn’t think that that would lead to a long lasting friendship. Mike never mentioned Steve. How was she supposed to know? “I – I didn’t . . .”

El made a noise that Nancy didn’t understand.

“But you know him?” Holly repeated herself.

Nancy looked at Jonathan. “Uh, yeah. We went to school together, yeah,”

“And Nancy dated him for like a year,” said Mike.

Holly practically jumped right out of her chair. “I knew it! Oh my God, I have to tell Stephanie! I knew it! You have to tell me everything –“

“I don’t think that’s appropriate,” said Karen. “Why talk about past romances, when Nancy has a wonderful husband right here?”

She couldn't believe what her mother was saying. Nancy had always been under the impression that her mom just put up with Jonathan, and didn't necessarily like him. And she definitely remembered her absolutely *adoring* Steve back in the day.

Holly looked disappointed. "Maybe another time, kiddo," said Nancy.

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Nancy and Jonathan were to stay in Nancy's old bedroom that had since been turned into a guest room. It was odd to say but Nancy felt . . . strange sleeping in the same bed with Jonathan. They hadn't done that a while. That said more about the state of their marriage than Nancy wanted to talk about currently.

"Do you want me to sleep on the floor?" he asked her once they were both in their pajamas.

She shook her head. Jonathan looked at her for a moment too long, but did as he was told. They couldn't have been sleeping further apart from each other.

The sound of Jonathan's snoring was more annoying than comforting. It made Nancy want to strangle him. She didn't want to talk, but she wanted him to want to talk. It was so easy to blame all of their current issues on him, and so that's what she did. There hadn't been any passion there in what felt years and their friendship had disappeared long before that.

Perhaps a problem in it's own right was the fact that Nancy was laying up, thinking about Steve Harrington. It felt like a lifetime ago that she'd been with him. He'd been so . . . different from Jonathan. Bold, confident. It had been the most attractive thing in the world to her then. And then she'd met Jonathan and things had changed. Everything that she thought she wanted in a boyfriend no longer applied to Steve. The things she wanted now didn't really apply to Jonathan, either. Things changed so much. They never stopped changing.



She wondered what Steve was doing now aside from coaching Phys Ed and being friends with Mike. Did they talk about her together? Did Mike update Steve on her life? Steve probably had a girlfriend now, and at least one kid out of wedlock. He'd probably gone through the entirety of the female population in Hawkins and was going out of town to find his next piece of ass. Him staying in Hawkins wasn't all that much of a shock. She'd always known that there was no way he was getting into college, but why would he want to stay there? He was such a big city kind of guy – the crowd in the city would've loved him. What would it have been like, if she'd lived in New York with Steve instead of Jonathan? Fun? Possibly. Entertaining? Definitely. Spontaneous? For sure.

To be honest, she liked the thought. When she'd left Hawkins, all she'd wanted was a quiet life. No excitement, just a boring, simple life. God, it sounded so appealing back then.

## 2. Chapter 2

As if on cue, Nancy ran into Steve the following day while out shopping with Karen and Holly. She probably wouldn't even have seen him if Holly hadn't yelled out "Steve!"

And there he was. It couldn't have been anyone else but him, even from a distance. He was reaching up to grab a box of pasta from the top shelf down the aisle, and smiled when he saw Holly. As if in slow motion, he flipped his hair out of his face with a flick of his head and walked towards them, waving. After all these years, he was still the most handsome man Nancy had ever seen in all her life. He'd filled out a bit, sure, but he still had the same build that he'd always had. And his beautiful, beautiful hair was shorter than it was the last time she'd seen him, but it was still large at the top and swooped over his forehead in a soft curl. He looked like a god damn movie star.

It was almost like he was strutting towards them, that's how good he looked.

"Hey, Holly Jolly!" he held out his hand, offering her a high five. "Karen, how are you?" he gave her a short hug and kissed her on the cheek, which Karen accepted graciously.

"Hi, Steve, how are you?" she asked, but Steve's attention was already drawn to Nancy. He hadn't recognized her from far away, clearly, and now he looked like he'd seen a ghost, like he'd had the wind knocked out of him. Nancy felt the same.

"Hi, N-N-Nancy," he stuttered.

"Hi, Steve," she said breathlessly.

"I hadn't r-realized th-that you were h-home,"

"Yeah, I'm um, I'm in town for Mike –"

"And El's wedding, yeah, I'm going too,"

Nancy wasn't sure why she was surprised by this, especially

considering that she now knew that he and Mike were friends. Her heart raced in her chest at the idea of seeing him there. He always looked so stunning in a suit.

“Oh – I uh, I guess I’ll see you there then,” said Nancy.

“Jonathan will be there too,” Karen cut in, a clearly fake smile painted on her face. “Nancy’s husband,”

Both Nancy and Holly shot her a look.

“Oh, yeah, I heard you’d gotten married. Congrats,” said Steve, never skipping a beat.

“Thank you,”

“Almost six years now,” Karen continued.

“Well, I uh, I always knew you two would play the long game. You’re like, meant for each other,” Steve noted. Nancy couldn’t believe what she was hearing. Was this her Steve Harrington or a clone? “I got to get going, I have uh, I have some cooking to do at home. But I’ll see you around. Holly, I’ll see you in class on Monday. Keep kicking butt,” he ruffled her hair and Holly grinned up at him, not even bothering to fix her hair when he walked away.

Nancy watched him leave and thought to herself that she hadn’t felt butterflies in her stomach in forever. Steve was – so beautiful. She wanted to keep looking at him and keep getting lost in the warmth of his voice. Karen was speaking, trying to get her to come along, but Nancy couldn’t hear a word she was saying. All she wanted was more time with Steve – even just a couple of seconds would do. She just needed to speak with him for a little bit longer.

“Can you hang on, one sec?” Nancy asked, not even bothering to hear Karen’s answer. She raced down the aisle so that she could catch up with Steve before he turned the corner and she tapped him on the shoulder. The slow motion returned. “Steve,”

“Hey,” he said it as if it was a question.

“Hey,”

She was so busy staring at him that she forgot that she was supposed to be talking. "What's up?" he questioned.

"Oh, um, I um . . . I uh, I don't really . . ." she paused. "Do you want to like, get coffee with me?"

If he was surprised, he hid it well. There were a couple of seconds of awkward silence, but Steve managed out, "Yeah. Yeah, that would be great,"

Her face lit up. "Seriously?"

"Yeah. Sure, it'll be nice. Uh, when were you thinking?"

"Today, if you want, around four? I'm free,"

Steve nodded. "Alright, yeah. Sounds great. I'll see you guys then,"

Nancy's heart stopped racing instantly and the perfection of the scene set around them fell to disaster. "Wh-what? What do you mean?"

"Uh, I mean 'I'll see you guys then.' You and Jonathan,"

Of course he meant with her and Jonathan. It wasn't appropriate for men and married women to go out alone together. She had to be accompanied by her husband, even if her husband and Steve had never really gotten along, even if things were going to be extremely awkward. They probably would've been awkward to begin with, but Nancy hadn't even thought about that. It was like all she could think about was being with Steve, with being caught up in his presence.

"Oh, um, yeah, of course. I'll, uh, I don't really know this town anymore, actually. Do you know anywhere we can . . .?"

"Yeah, yeah. There's this place on Main Street, where the pawn shop used to be. Do you remember it?"

Nancy racked her memory for coherent thoughts, but found none. She could just ask Holly or Mike later. Still, she answered, "Yeah, I remember,"

“So, I’ll see you then?” The air between them was so thick that someone could’ve cut it with a knife. There were long, drawn out pauses between every other sentence.

“Uh, yeah. You will,” Nancy felt like such a loser and she hated herself for it. Fuck Steve Harrington for still being able to turn her into a complete mess just by looking her way.

He mustered up a thin-lipped smile and nodded, stepping backwards. “Okay? Bye,”

“Bye!” she yelled after him, a little too loudly. Why didn’t she know how to speak suddenly? She was twenty-eight, not some teenage girl. God, she was worse than Holly. Holly, who bombarded her with more questions the second that Nancy rejoined her family. “Chill,” said Nancy, even though she herself was the farthest thing from the word. “We’re just having coffee later,”

“Are you sure about that?” asked Karen as she sifted through loaves of bread. “I mean, are you sure it’s a good idea?”

Nancy bit the inside of her mouth. “Jonathan’s coming too, Mom.”

Karen’s expression instantly softened. “Oh. Oh! That’s lovely. I’m sure you three will have fun,”

“I can do things without my husband, you know, Mom,”

“I know that, Nancy. I have been married for nearly thirty years now, thank you,”

Married for thirty years, maybe, but not happily. If anyone shouldn’t be giving marriage advice, it was her mother. “Just catching up with an old friend. Besides, it’s Steve. He still lives in Hawkins, you must see him all the time,”

“Often enough,” Karen shrugged. “He just came back to town about a year ago after being away for a while,”

“What? Why?”

“That’s up to him to tell you,”

Nancy wasn’t sure why her mother would even bring it up if she wasn’t going to explain what she meant. That was so classic and her mother’s annoying tendencies were one thing she definitely hadn’t missed in New York. She really didn’t even want to talk about Steve with her, especially if she was just going to speak badly about the whole situation. “So how long is the guest list for the wedding?” Nancy asked as they strolled down the next aisle, trying to change the subject.

“Well, neither of them know too many people, so we’re just keeping it to close family and friends,”

“El wanted a big wedding like on television,” Holly added. “I think she’s pretty bummed that they aren’t having that,”

“Nonsense, Holly. Jane is so crazy about Mike that I doubt she cares. You’re the one who’s bummed that it’s not going to be like on TV,” said Karen.

Holly rolled her eyes. “I just want it to be fancy! I’ve never been to a wedding before,”

Nancy felt a pang in her chest. She could already tell where this was going. “What was your wedding like, Nancy? I’ve never asked you,”

God. Nancy swallowed down her fears. “It was uh, small. And by that I mean that we only had the two witnesses who needed to be there legally,”

“What was your dress like?”

“I didn’t have one. I just came in my clothes from work,”

“Seriously? That doesn’t sound very romantic,”

“All that should matter at a wedding is that you’re with the person you love. Who cares about the flashy stuff?”

Holly took the cart from Karen and started pushing it herself. “I

guess I do. Man, no offense, but I hope I'm not as boring as you when I grow up,"

*Yeah. Me neither.*

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Jonathan was less than thrilled when Nancy had arrived home and told him their plans for the afternoon. It wasn't like she could blame him since her own excitement had died down the second Steve had extended the invitation to Jonathan. The whole meet up was going to be uncomfortable at best and disastrous at the worst.

"Steve has never liked me," said Jonathan as they approached the coffee shop. "Why do I have to come?"

"Because the both of us have to go,"

"Why?"

"I don't know," Nancy, who was walking in front of him, stopped short and prevented him from opening the door. "I really don't know, okay? Just please don't – just try and be nice, alright?"

"Nance, I'm not sixteen anymore. I know how to fake it,"

He hadn't called her 'Nance' in a while and it softened her exterior. She reached forward and took his hand, so they could walk into the shop together.

The place was small enough that there weren't too many customers. Everyone inside seemed to know each other, including Steve, who was leaning against the counter, talking to one of the baristas. Nancy couldn't believe that he'd gotten here first. From what she could remember, he was always late for everything.

He waved at them when the bell on the door rang. He put his hand on the barista's shoulder, as if to say 'talk to you later' and Nancy wondered how they knew each other. She was pretty enough and the possibility that Steve had slept with her knawed at Nancy's insides.

Steve shook Jonathan's hand eagerly, looking genuinely pleased to see him. "Hey man, how are you? It's so good to see you,"

Nancy knew Jonathan was taken aback by this, but he didn't show it. He gave Steve an equally cheery "It's good to see you too,"

Steve led them to a table next to the window, holding out Nancy's chair for her. She blushed as she sat down. Perhaps this was why Steve had wanted Jonathan to come along. Maybe he was planning to flirt with her in front of Jonathan, prove that he was still better with women than he was. Suddenly this thing didn't seem as irritating to Nancy anymore.

"So, how's New York? Mike tells me you guys have been living there since high school,"

Okay, so Mike did update Steve on her life. But did Steve ask for these updates? Was he still interested in her?

"We decided to stay there after University," Jonathan explained. "Saved up our money, got an apartment,"

"That sounds nice," said Steve. "What's New York like? Is it like how it is in movies?"

"Kind of. Except when you live there, it's not just going around Time Square over and over again. You have to go to the parts of the city that aren't as pretty,"

"Oh, so it's kind of a less suburban version of Indiana?"

"I guess,"

The barista that Steve had been speaking to before came over to take their order. This time, she put her hand on Steve's shoulder and held it there while they each placed their own requests. "Coming right up," said the woman.

"Thanks, Miriam," Steve winked.

Jonathan and Nancy exchanged a look, which Steve picked up on. "She's a friend from work,"



‘Friend.’ Yeah, right. Steve Harrington couldn't be just friends with a woman.

“Aren’t you a gym teacher?” asked Jonathan. It came out as condescending, even though he hadn’t meant for it to be.

“Nah. I’m just assisting the actual teacher right now. He’s getting pretty old and I’m friends with the new principal who asked if I’d sit in on classes and look out for him,”

“That’s nice of you,” said Nancy.

Steve nodded. “I guess. But yeah, I actually run this shelter in the next town over. I met Miriam there a few years back when it was just getting started,”

“A shelter? Like for animals?” Nancy questioned.

Steve seemed confused that they really had no idea about his life, like they should’ve heard about it or something. “No, no, for LGBT kids,”

Nancy thought that she must’ve looked like a complete and total idiot because she had absolutely zero idea what he was talking about. Okay, she knew what LGBT meant. She’d heard the term a couple of times in passing in New York, but she didn’t think that people in Hawkins even knew what being gay really was. All it was to them was an insult, a term used to make anyone who was even a little different feel shitty. Steve had been one of those people. Jonathan looked just as shocked as she was. He was blinking rapidly, as if to see if he was in a dream or something.

“You two totally don’t seem surprised at all,” Steve chuckled.

“I’m sorry,” Nancy said nearly instantly. “I just – we just – how – how did that happen?”

Miriam returned with their orders and Nancy wondered if she was a lesbian. She didn’t look like a lesbian. She didn’t have short hair and she was wearing lots of makeup. Could lesbians do that?

Steve sipped at his cappuccino. “I don’t want to go into any long

details or whatever, so the short of it is that I moved to San Francisco. I met some people out there. I did a lot of talking and a lot of researching. I worked my ass off. I came back here when my mom died, moved back into my old house and opened the shelter up. Not much to it,”

There was a lot more to it. There was a hell of a lot more to it and Nancy wanted to know every detail, but she knew Steve wouldn't say anything with Jonathan here. Hell, he might not even say it just to her. They didn't know each other anymore. She made a mental note to ask Mike what he knew later.

Jonathan was silent.

“Like I said, we don't have to get into it,” Steve repeated upon noticing Nancy's expression. “Why don't we talk about you? What do you two do for a living?”

Nancy cleared her throat. “I work in an office building. We uh, we ship bulk packages to different companies,”

It was the most boring job in the world, nothing compared to Steve's clearly exciting life. Once again, she felt stupid. Steve didn't make her feel that way though. “That sounds super complicated. I don't think I'd be able to do anything like that. Good for you. What about you, Byers?”

Jonathan, who was deep in thought about something, looked up, startled. “Wh-what?”

“Where do you work? Like what's your job?”

“Oh, I'm a, um, I'm a freelance photographer,”

“That's awesome, man. That's what you always wanted to do, isn't it?” Steve inquired.

“Uh, yeah, it is. I have to go to the bathroom –“ Jonathan stood up, not looking either of them in the eye and jetted off. He'd been acting weird lately, for sure, but this was beyond weird. Nancy hoped that Steve didn't ask about it, and he didn't. Anybody else would've.

“I’m really happy for you guys,” said Steve, playing with his fingers. “I’m happy everything worked out, you know? You deserve it,”

“Thanks,” Nancy bit her lip. The awkward silence that they were drowning in had become too familiar. “Um, how about you? Are you seeing anybody?”

“No,” he shook his head. “Not currently,”

Not currently. That meant he’d probably just broken up with someone. Single, but recently single. “Oh, I’m um, I’m sorry,” She wasn’t sorry. She wanted him to be single.

“It’s fine. Being single’s fun. I don’t think people in relationships ever think so, but people like me, people who are always somehow single, we like it,” Steve smiled to himself.

“Aw, come on, you’re never single. You always had a girlfriend in high school,”

“Things change. This town, for one. It’s certainly . . . quieter then it was back then,”

“Thank God for that,” Nancy took a drink from her cup. As much as she didn’t like to think about everything that had gone down here, those memories were never far from her day to day thoughts.

“I’m just – I really am happy that everything worked out for everybody. You and Jonathan. Mike and Eleven. Everyone got their happy ending,”

“What about you?” Nancy asked, annoyed that he kept referring to herself and Jonathan as some sort of perfect couple.

“I don’t know if happy endings are really my scene,” he noted. “But I’m happy now. That’s got to count for something,”

“I want you to be happy, you know,” said Nancy, resting her chin in her hands. “I don’t know if I’ve ever said that, but I just wanted you to know,”

Steve took a bite from one of his cookies. "Thanks. You know, we never really got to talk after . . . whatever. It's nice to know that you approve of . . . me being happy,"

Nancy lifted her head, taken aback by the thinly veiled hostility. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Nothing. Just that . . . I don't know. I guess I just didn't think you cared that much about my happiness,"

"What? Of course I do!"

"Nancy, you haven't spoken to me since you broke up with me over a decade ago. And that wasn't on the best terms, in case you've forgotten,"

The last thing she wanted to do was rehash bad memories. After all, Hawkins was a bad memory in itself. She didn't want to think about bad memories with Steve, especially because she hadn't even thought about those memories herself. Not in a long while. Steve had clearly thought about them over the years and that just made her look selfish, which she didn't really feel that she was.

"Well . . . it's not like you've spoken to me either,"

He furrowed his brow. "I was over at your house like, all the time, helping the kids out with their campaigns. I drove Mike everywhere during his freshman year. I was always around, I always said hello, but you'd just wave and walk away. You didn't seem to care if I was happy then,"

"Steve . . . I – that's not true . . ."

"I'm not mad about it. We don't need to argue. I'm just telling you that that's how it happened. Anyways, do you want one of these cookies? They're really good,"

It had been so long since she'd hung out with a man who wasn't Jonathan that she'd forgotten that arguments didn't always end the same. Jonathan always ended every fight the same way. He would stomp off, then he'd return hours later, apologizing and giving in to whatever she said, even though it hadn't resolved the problem. Steve

wasn't agreeing with her, he was just changing the topic. Why didn't he want to keep talking about this? He was the one who'd brought it up in the first place. Why did he even bring it up? Did he still hold some anger towards her? Did he hate her and was just being nice when he'd agreed to meet them?

Nancy didn't have the chance to ask him because Jonathan returned from the bathroom, looking as flustered as before. She thought that she knew what that was about, but as per usual, she ignored the voice in the back of her head telling her to bring it up.

"So tell me about everything, Byers," said Steve, so casually that Nancy wants to scream. "Your job sounds super interesting. Got any fun stories?"

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Two in one day, wow. There's a lot of hints about story points in this chapter that are going to be discussed further on. Don't worry! Everything is brought up for a reason.

### **Author's Note:**

I'm so excited for this fic! Season 2 was.....a mess, to put it lightly and I'm hoping that this fic will cheer up some disheartened Stancy shippers. Please comment! I really enjoy reading them :)